

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6142
INFO USDOC WASHDC
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMCONSUL IBADAN
AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN AIRCRAFT IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

REF: (A) 77 LAGOS 5532, (B) STATE 15477

1. PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY AJAYI TOLD EMBOFF THAT PROSPECTIVE AIRCRAFT OWNERS MUST GET LETTERS OF APPROVAL FROM MIN CIVAIR, AS DESCRIBED REFTEL A, IF FIVE CESSNA AIRCRAFT DESCRIBED REFTEL B ARE TO BE IMPORTED. HE SAID THAT APPLICATIONS HAD BEEN FILED BY KADUNA CLUB, LAGOS CLUB AND BENUE CEMENT AND THAT ALL THREE WOULD BE TOLD EITHER PRO OR CON WITHIN TWO WEEKS AS TO WHETHER THEY CAN IMPORT AIRCRAFT. AJAYI SAID THAT HE WAS NOT ABLE TO FIND APPLICATIONS BY GIACHETTI AND SONGAI, IMPLYING THEY HAVE NOT APPLIED. COMMENT: THIS DOES NOT SOUND REASONABLE SINCE GIACHETTI ALREADY HAS AIRCRAFT REGISTERED IN COUNTRY AND WOULD BE WELL AWARE OF APPLICATION PROCEDURE.

2. AJAYI WAS CURIOUS TO KNOW WHAT WOULD BECOME OF DOWN PAYMENT FOR THOSE WHOSE APPLICATIONS WERE REJECTED BUT LABELED QTE STUPID UNQTE ANYONE WHO WOULD MAKE DOWN PAYMENT WITHOUT FIRST
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RECEIVING CIVAIR APPROVAL.

3. IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS A AND B REFTEL B, AJAYI SAID APPLICATION PROCEDURE APPLIED TO ANY AIRCRAFT BROUGHT INTO NIGERIA REGARDLESS OF NATIONALITY. HE CALLED CIVAIR APPROVAL A MEANS TO MONITOR INFLOW OF AIRCRAFT AND DENIED THAT IT WAS AAN OFFICIAL IMPORT RESTRICTION. AIRCRAFT NOT MENTIONED IN IMPORT PROHIBITION ORDER

1977, WHICH LISTS PROHIBITED AND LICESNSED IMPORTS.

4. COMMENT: IN 1976 NIGERIA IMPORTED ONLY 25 AIRCRAFT OF ALL TYPES; IN 1977 TWENTY-SIX. IN A LARGE COUNTRY WITH A DIFFICULT GROUND TRANSPORT SITUATION AND STRONG GROWTH IN GNP THIS REPRESENTS ONLY A FRACTION OF DEMAND. THOUGH NEVER PUBLICLY STATED, FMG VIEWS AIRCRAFT CONTROL AS ASPECT OF NATIONAL SECURITY, NOT COMMERCE. SOME OBSERVERS FEEL THAT FMG FEARS FOREIGNERS MIGHT USE AIRCRAFT FOR PURPOSES INIMICAL TO NIGERIAN WELFARE.

5. IN WORKING GROUPS OF RECENT HIGH LEVEL ECONOMIC TALKS EMBOFF ASKED MIN TRADE OFFICIALS FOR RELIEF FROM THIS NON-TARIFF BARRIER WHICH DISCRIMINATES AGAINST U.S., THE LARGEST BUILDER AND EXPORTER OF AIRCRAFT IN WORLD. EMBOFF POINTED OUT THAT NOT ONLY ARE AIRCRAFT RESTRICTED BUT THAT A DECISION ON APPLICATION TAKES SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR. MIN TRADE OFFICIALS EXPRESSED SURPRISE BUT DID NOT AGREE TO ANY POSITIVE ACTION. WHEN HIGH LEVEL TALKS RESUME THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TOPIC TO ENTER IN TRADE AGENDA. WE COULD PRESS FOR GREATER AIRCRAFT IMPORTS AND SPEEDIER DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS.
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